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SIPDIS
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DEPT FOR AF/W ASHLEY STEWART, OI/HR COLLEEN NEVILLE
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: BENIN: SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Ref: STATE 120835

11. (SBU) Poloff met with Deputy Director for International Institutions Thierry Alia and delivered points reftel on December 4, 12009. Alia, whose most recent prior assignment was in the human rights office at the Ministry of Justice, said that Benin has been a democracy since the end of the "revolutions" in 1990, and will continue to develop its human rights even while surrounded by "difficult neighbors".

12. (U) Alia noted that Benin had been a lead drafter of the AU Charter of Human Rights and that all of Benin's laws conformed to those principals. He said that the government was fully on board with human rights and the next steps would be educating the populace of those rights.

13. (SBU) Responses keyed to the questions in para 5 reftel:
---Capacity: Benin has an Embassy in Geneva.
---Alignment with US on key issues: Benin abstained in all three country specific human rights resolutions and in the anti-Palestinian resolutions. This is an improvement from previous "yes" votes.
---Group Dynamics: Benin is a member of the AU, OIC and G77. However, Benin has in some cases voted independently.

14. (SBU) COMMENT. Benin would be very open to running for a seat on the Council. They are proud of their democracy and human rights record. Post knows of no circumstances that would make Benin unsuitable for the task of promoting human rights.

KNIGHT